



File Code: 1950

Date: March 11, 2013

The Cherokee National Forest is proposing the Paint Creek Project to work toward the desired conditions for the project area, as directed in the Cherokee National Forest's *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan* (RLRMP). We request your comments on the proposed action in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The RLRMP identifies goals and objectives to be implemented under various management prescriptions. The approximately 16,136 acres of National Forest System lands in the Paint Creek analysis area are distributed among seven management prescriptions, with approximately 1,126 acres unclassified to a management prescription (Table 1).

Table 1: Prescription Areas in the Paint Creek analysis area

Prescription	Description	Acres*
4.A	Appalachian Trail Corridor	2,327
7.B	Scenic Corridor/Sensitive Viewsheds	2,608
7.D	Concentrated Recreation Zone	48
7.E.2	Dispersed Recreation Areas-Suitable	2,333
8.C	Black Bear Habitat Management	6,155
9.F	Rare Communities	105
12.A	Remote Backcountry Recreation-Few Open Roads	1,434
UNC	Unclassified	1,126
<b>Total Acres</b>		<b>16,136</b>

\* Acres reported in all tables are approximate

Per the RLRMP, three of the above prescriptions – 7.B, 7.E.2, and 8.C — are suitable for timber management. Combined, these prescriptions total approximately 11,096 acres, of which 7,204 acres are in Land Class Codes suitable for timber production (Table 2). The remaining prescriptions, including the unclassified lands, are considered not suitable for timber management.

Table 2: Acres by Suitable Prescription

Prescription	ESH Objective in RLRMP	Total Acres	Suitable Acres*	Acres Treated	Percent of Prescription
7.B	None	2,608	1,102	30	2%
7.E.2	4% - 10%	2,333	896	0	0%
8.C	4% - 8%	6,155	5,206	347	7%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>11,096</b>	<b>7,204</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>5%</b>

\* Total acres of stands within the prescription having a suitable land class.

## Proposed Action

### 1. Provide early successional habitat

Approximately 377 acres of early successional habitat (ESH) would be created (via the shelterwood method) for wildlife in the Paint Creek Project area utilizing commercial timber harvest. All but one of the 17 stands proposed for ESH creation are in the 8. C prescription, which has an ESH objective in the RLRMP of between 4% to 8%. Approximately 30 acres of stand 4 in compartment 217 (stand totals 40 acres) is in the 7.B prescription, which has no ESH objective in the RLRMP. The remaining 10 acres of stand 4 is found in 8.C. Also note that gaps up to two-acres in size would be created for ESH in compartment 214, stands 13 and 20 and compartment 215, stands 22, 28, 47, and 53 (Table 3). The remaining portions of these stands would be thinned (also see Table 6). The 377 total acres of ESH equals 5% of all the suitable acreage in the Paint Creek project area (Table 2).

Table 3: Early Successional Habitat

Compartment	Stand	Age	Acres	Forest Type
214	13	111	4	60: Chestnut oak – scarlet oak
214	15	111	32	45: Chestnut oak – scarlet oak – yellow pine
214	20	111	3	60: Chestnut oak – scarlet oak
214	26	111	15	60: Chestnut oak – scarlet oak
215	22	100	5	9: White pine – cove hardwood
215	28	83	10	56: Yellow poplar – white oak – northern red oak
215	46	100	40	41: Cove hardwood – white pine – hemlock
215	47	112	3	53: White oak – northern red oak – hickory
215	53	83	4	56: Yellow poplar – white oak – northern red oak
216	2	96	40	60: Chestnut oak – scarlet oak
216	25	95	29	41: Cove hardwood – white pine – hemlock
216	29	96	13	56: Yellow poplar – white oak – northern red oak
217	4	101	40	53: White oak – northern red oak – hickory
217	10	97	23	10: White pine – upland hardwood
217	31	110	40	42: Upland hardwood – white pine
217	36	93	36	41: Cove hardwood – white pine – hemlock
218	10	104	40	56: Yellow poplar – white oak – northern red oak
Total acres			377	

All stands in Table 3 would require pre- and post-harvest site preparation and release treatments:

- Pre-harvest site preparation: Prior to harvest, midstory species would be controlled with an herbicide (Imazapyr and Glyphosate) to reduce post-harvest sprouting of overly-competitive species.
- Mast tree seedling plantings: Seedlings of mast-producing tree species would be planted, where needed in regenerated areas to augment natural reproduction.
- Post-harvest treatments: One-two years after harvest, use mechanical (e.g. chainsaw slashdown) or herbicide treatments (Imazapyr and Glyphosate), and two-four years after

harvest, use herbicide treatments (Triclopyr) to reduce overly-competitive sprouts. At about age 10, use chainsaws to provide for release of mast-producing trees.

## 2. Crop Tree

Use mechanical treatment methods (e.g. chainsaw) on approximately 674 acres (32 stands) to select and provide for the release of mast-producing trees (Table 4). Note: stand 39 in compartment 217 was split out from stand 4. The remaining portion of stand 4 would be treated to create ESH (see Table 3).

Table 4: Crop Tree

Compartment	Stand	Acres	Compartment	Stand	Acres
205	46	18	217	1	13
206	33	13	217	2	16
209	35	27	217	13	21
210	16	16	217	20	28
210	17	22	217	39	17
213	20	21	218	6	32
214	32	12	219	49	13
215	11	27	219	50	16
215	21	14	223	1	5
215	23	26	223	14	13
215	40	14	223	25	25
215	45	18	262	4	42
215	54	35	262	26	20
216	11	27	262	31	44
216	16	28	264	15	20
216	27	16	<b>Total acres</b>		<b>674</b>
216	40	15			

## 3. Midstory

The stocking density of the understory and midstory on 95 acres (two stands; Table 5) would be reduced by about 25 percent using herbicides (Imazapyr and Glyphosate).

Table 5: Midstory

Compartment	Stand	Acres
217	17	47
217	33	48
<b>Total acres</b>		<b>95</b>

## 4. Thinning

Thin approximately 152 acres (eight stands) to a basal area of 40 square feet per acre (Table 6). In compartment 214, stands 13 and 20 and compartment 215, stands 22, 28, 47, and 53, gaps up to two-acres in size would be created to provide ESH, with the remaining portions of the stands to be

commercially thinned (see Table 3 for ESH). Two stands—Compartment 262, Stands 14 and 30—would be thinned noncommercially.

Table 6: Thinning

Compartment	Stand	Acres
214	13	19
214	20	17
215	22	20
215	28	41
215	47	12
215	53	16
262	14	10
262	30	17
<b>Total acres</b>		<b>152</b>

All stands in Table 6 would require pre- and post-harvest site preparation and release treatments:

- Pre-harvest site preparation: Prior to harvest, midstory species would be controlled with an herbicide (Imazapyr and Glyphosate) to reduce post-harvest sprouting of overly-competitive species.
- Post-harvest treatments: One-two years after harvest, use mechanical (e.g. chainsaw slashdown) or herbicide treatments (Imazapyr and Glyphosate), and two-four years after harvest, use herbicide treatments (Triclopyr) to reduce overly-competitive sprouts. At about age 10, use chainsaws to provide for release of mast-producing trees.

##### 5. Maintain existing and create temporary roads

Approximately 11.4 miles of existing road would be maintained, and 0.3 miles of temporary road would be constructed in support of timber sale activities (Table 7). The temporary road would be closed after the timber sale. Approximately 0.1 miles of Hurricane Gap Road (FR 31) would be reconstructed to repair damage from a landslide that removed part of the road.

Table 7: Maintained and Temporary Roads

Road #	Road Name	Miles	Action
22171	North Rough Branch	1.3	Pre-haul Maintenance
31	Hurricane Gap	5.5	Pre-haul Maintenance
31B	Little Paint Creek	0.7	Pre-haul Maintenance
3214	Ricker Mountain	2.0	Pre-haul Maintenance
422B1	New Bellcow Mountain	0.5	Pre-haul Maintenance
OR-14	North Courtland	1.4	Pre-haul Maintenance
<b>Total Miles</b>		<b>11.4</b>	
31	Hurricane Gap	<b>0.1</b>	Road Reconstruction
Temporary Road in C215/S47		<b>0.3</b>	Temporary Construction

## 6. Prescribed Burn

Conduct low-intensity burns on approximately 1,955 acres in four burn blocks (Table 8). Fire control lines would include existing roads, streams, constructed dozer lines and hand lines. Individual burn blocks may be reburned on a two to ten-year rotation.

Table 8: Prescribed Burns

<b>Burn Name</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Brushy Branch	170
Devil's Kitchen	478
Ricker Mountain	87
Upper Paint Creek	1,220
<b>Total acres</b>	<b>1,955</b>

## 7. Improve Wildlife Habitat

The following actions are proposed to improve habitat conditions for terrestrial wildlife (Table 9):

- Boxes – place bat roost boxes and bird/small mammal nest boxes.
- Water – construct waterholes, vernal ponds, or wetland (~ 1/8<sup>th</sup> acre)
- Logs – provide ruffed grouse drumming logs

Table 9: Terrestrial Wildlife Activities

<b>Location</b>	<b>Boxes (each)</b>	<b>Water (feature)</b>	<b>Logs (each)</b>
Compartment 214	4	1	10
Compartment 215	12	1	30
Compartment 216	6	0	15
Compartment 217	10	2	25
Compartment 218	2	1	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>85</b>

In addition, noncommercially thin approximately two acres of white pine and hardwood trees and reduce the density of rhododendron at Allen Gap Pond (Compartment 210, Stands 23 and 25) to reduce shading effects and improve wetland habitat for rare species.

## 8. Decommission

Approximately 2.32 miles of authorized roads and 1.39 miles of unauthorized roads would be decommissioned, per the recommendations provided in the Paint Creek Transportation Analysis Plan (TAP) (Table 10).

Table 10: Roads to be Decommissioned

Road #	Miles	Road #	Miles
41P	0.26	OR-7	0.15
422	1.68	OR-8	0.10
422B	0.38	OR-9	0.13
5112	0.50	OR-10	0.06
OR-2*	0.01	OR-11	0.07
OR-3	0.02	OR-22	0.15
OR-4	0.07	<b>Total miles</b>	<b>3.71</b>
OR-6	0.13		

\* OR = Old Road

9. Roads to be authorized

Approximately 8.3 miles of roads would be authorized, per the recommendations provided in the Paint Creek TAP (Table 11).

Table 11: Roads to be Authorized

Road #	Road Name	Miles
OR-13	Band Mill Road	0.45
OR-14	North Courtland	1.40
OR-15	Courtland East	0.43
OR-16	Brushy Ridge	1.05
OR-17	Grassy Branch	0.97
OR-18	East Grassy Ridge	1.65
OR-19	West Grassy Ridge	0.78
OR-20	Paint Mountain East	1.37
OR-21	Courtland Place Loop	0.11
OR-23	Dillard Place	0.10
<b>Total miles</b>		<b>8.31</b>

Responding to Scoping

Responses, including names and addresses, received will be used in the Environmental Analysis process, and will be considered part of the public record for the Stoney Creek Project. Comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days beginning the day after publication of the legal notice in the *Greeneville Sun*. Written comments should be sent to:

Terry Bowerman  
Cherokee National Forest  
Unaka Ranger District  
4900 Asheville Hwy  
Greeneville, TN 37743

Office: (423) 638-4109  
FAX: (423) 638-6599

Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Comments may also be mailed electronically to: [comments-southern-cherokee-nolichucky-unaka@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-cherokee-nolichucky-unaka@fs.fed.us). Please identify "Paint Creek Project" in the subject line.

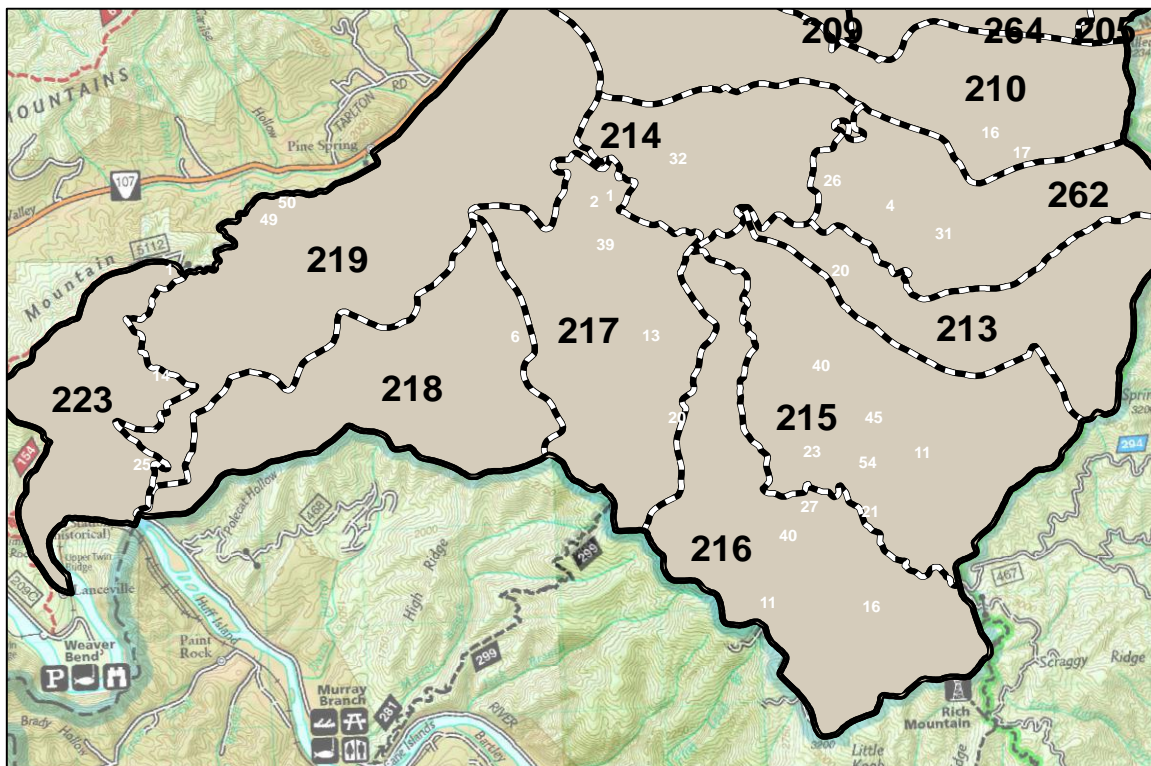
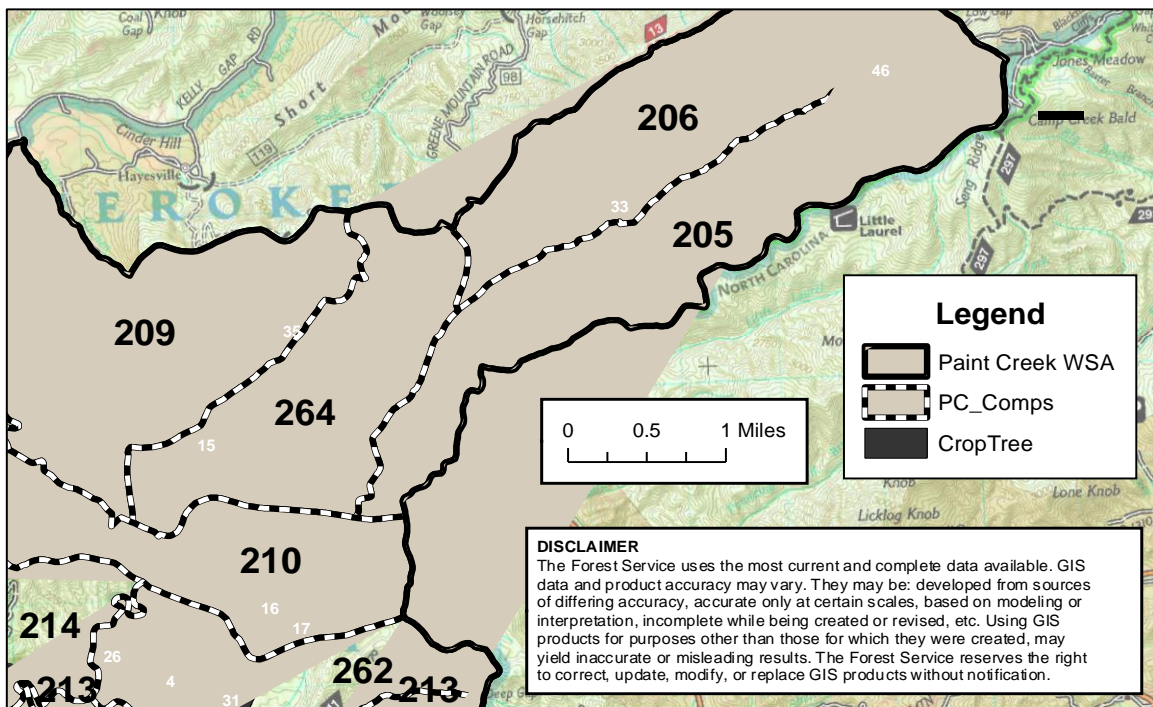
Additional information may be obtained from Jeff Chynoweth at Cherokee National Forest, Unaka Ranger District, 4900 Asheville Hwy, Greeneville, TN 37743 or by phone: (423) 638-4109 or Fax: (423) 638-6599. All comments will be available for public inspection.

/s/ Terry S. Bowerman

Terry Bowerman  
Unaka District Ranger

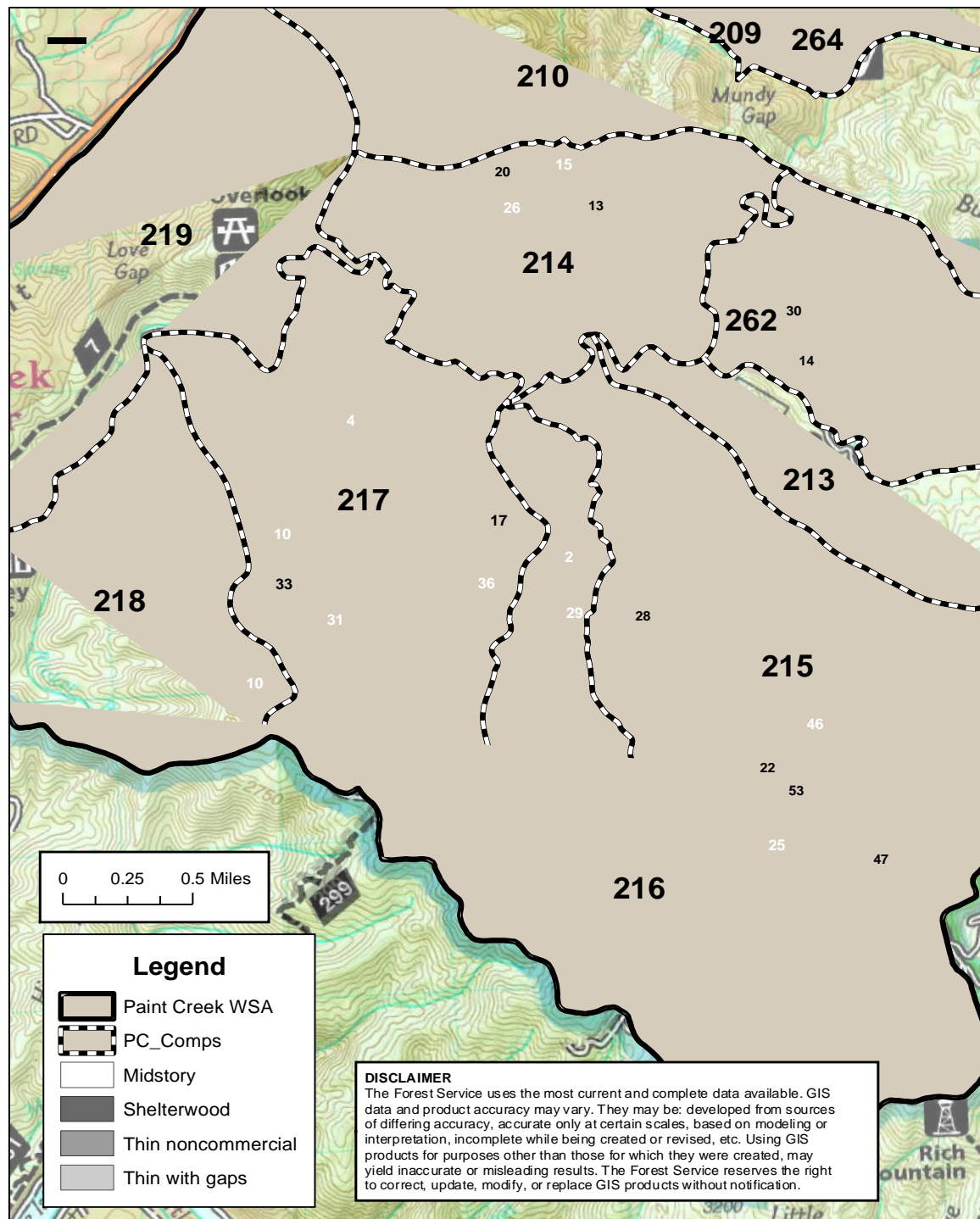
Attachments (3): Paint Creek Project: Crop Tree Treatment Map  
Paint Creek Project: Midstory, Shelterwood, and Thinning Treatments Map  
Paint Creek Project: Prescribed Burn Map

## Paint Creek Project: Crop Tree Treatment Map





## Paint Creek Project: Midstory, Shelterwood and Thinning Treatments Map



## Paint Creek Project: Prescribed Burn Map

